

## CHAPTER 9 | LESSON 3 Feudalism in Europe and Japan

**Lesson 3 Feudalism in Europe and Japan****BEFORE YOU READ**

In this lesson, you will learn about the similarities and differences between the feudal societies in Europe and Japan.

**AS YOU READ**

Use this chart to compare the main political, social, and cultural characteristics of Japanese and European feudalism.

**TERMS & NAMES**

- **bushido** the samurai code of behavior
- **epic poem** a long poem that usually tells the story of warriors or heroes

	Political	Social	Culture
Europe			
Japan			

**Similar Societies**

(pages 307–308)

*How was each society similar?*

Japanese and European feudalism shared a number of similarities. In both lands, individual landowners gained power. This happened because strong central governments did not exist in either region. In Europe, strong landowners were called lords. In Japan, they were called daimyo.

Both lords and daimyo had many peasants working for them. Farming was the main economic activity on both European and Japanese estates. Both Japan and Europe relied on professionally trained soldiers for protection. In Europe, these soldiers were known as knights. They were known as samurai in Japan.

Both Japanese and European societies placed a high value military skills and loyalty. In Europe, knights had to follow a code of behavior known as chivalry. According to this code, knights were expected to be brave, loyal, and show kindness to the weak. The samurai code of behavior was known as **bushido**. This code promoted similar values to chivalry: courage, kindness, and loyalty to the daimyo, or lord.

1. What was one similarity between Japanese and European feudalism?

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## READING STUDY GUIDE CONTINUED

**Cultural Differences**

(pages 308–310)

*How were the societies different?*

The feudal systems of Japan and Europe differed in several significant ways. Knights and samurai practiced different religions. Knights were Christians. Samurai practiced ancient Shintoism. They also practiced a form of Buddhism known as Zen. Buddhism is based on the teaching of Buddha.

The literature that dominated each society also differed. Poetry called haiku became popular in feudal Japan. Haiku are short poems that follow a common pattern. In Europe, the epic poem became popular. An **epic poem** is a long poem that usually tells the story of warriors or heroes. Lyric poetry was also a significant part of European literature. These poems resembled songs. Most lyric poetry praised women and ideal love.

The status of women in each society also differed. In feudal Europe, the rights of women were limited. Medieval women, for example, had no say in whom they married. The woman's father often made this decision. In general, European women were expected to stay at home. Many were trained only in household chores, such as sewing, spinning, and farming.

Women in feudal Japanese society enjoyed more equal status with men. In samurai families, women were allowed to inherit part of the family's estate. Women also could join Buddhist convents. In addition, women were expected to live up to values of honor and courage. Often women were trained in martial arts. Gradually, the role of women became more restricted.

2. What religions did knights and samurai practice?

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**Legacies of Feudalism**

(pages 310–311)

*What were the legacies of feudalism?*

Both feudal Europe and Japan left lasting legacies. A legacy is something that is handed down from a previous generation or time. Aspects of feudal culture can be seen today in Japan and Europe. For example, Japanese weddings are usually based on a Shinto ceremony. In addition, haiku continues to be a popular form of poetry in Japan. Many Japanese continue to have a strong sense of loyalty to their family. This attitude stems from the old code of bushido.

The ideals of loyalty and honor also remain strong in Europe. This is especially true within the military. Another legacy of the European Middle Ages is surnames, or family names. Many European family names have medieval origins. During the Middle Ages, a person took a family name from his or her job. As a result, the family names Baker, Carpenter, and Cook are still common. In addition, many medieval structures, such as churches and castles, still stand in Europe. So do key institutions from this era, such as the Catholic Church.

3. What impact did the code of bushido have on Japan?

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